

welcome by those in the Railroad industry and urge all my colleagues, including the 75 cosponsors of this bill in the Senate, to continue to give it strong backing to ensure these needed improvements are enacted and beneficiaries see these desperately-needed changes.

#### CONGRATULATING SENATOR STROM THURMOND ON HIS BIRTHDAY

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, this is a historic day in the Senate's history. Our colleague, the senior Senator from South Carolina, is celebrating his 99th birthday today. Bob Dole used to say that he followed STROM THURMOND very carefully; whatever he ate Bob Dole would eat. I have taken on that practice myself.

I congratulate Senator THURMOND on his 99th birthday today and wish him well. We are delighted to serve with him and honored that he is here with us today. We congratulate him on a very special occasion, not only in his life but in the life of the Senate as well.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

Mr. THURMOND. I love all of you men, but you women even more.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I observe Senator THURMOND's microphone was not on at that moment. I do want to observe also on this very happy 99th birthday, he is looking rather dapper today. He asked if perhaps the tie was a little too bright, and I said, no, it was befitting of him on this special occasion.

We all extend our birthday wishes and very best wishes for the future to Senator THURMOND. He has been an example and an inspiration to all of us. He has been a tremendous servant for the people of South Carolina. I have known very few people in my life more dedicated to their job and to the people they represent. We are just so very proud of Senator THURMOND and extend him our very best wishes. Thank you, sir.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

Mr. THURMOND. Thank you very much. I want to thank all of you. I appreciate every one of you, especially you ladies. You're all good looking. God bless you.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, with great pleasure, I wish the happiest of birthdays to the senior Senator from South Carolina. It was 99 years ago today that STROM THURMOND was born in Edgefield, SC.

Ninety-nine years old, what a feat. That makes him old enough to be my big brother!

When he was born, December 5, 1902, the Wright brothers had not yet made their historic flight at Kitty Hawk. He

has lived to see men walking on the Moon and American space vessels exploring the far reaches of our galaxy.

When he was born, Theodore Roosevelt was President of the United States. Since then we have had 16 more Presidents.

When he was born, the Kaiser still ruled in Germany. Since then, that country has seen the rise and fall of the Weimar Republic, the rise and fall of Nazi Germany, a divided Germany, and now a united Germany.

When he was born, the Czar still ruled in Russia. Since then, that country has experienced the Russian Revolution, the Bolshevik government, the Communist government, the Soviet empire, and now Russia again.

Almost as intriguing has been the extraordinary career of our remarkable colleague. During the same time period, he has been a teacher, an athletic coach, an educational administrator, a lawyer, a state legislator, and a circuit court judge.

He won his first elective office, County Superintendent, the same year that Herbert Hoover won his first elective office, 1928. He was a soldier in World War II, where he took part in the D-Day invasion of Normandy. He was a presidential nominee in 1948 and the governor of his beloved State of South Carolina from 1947 to 1951. He has been a Democrat, a Dixiecrat, and a Republican. Most of all he is a great American.

All of this would have been more than enough experiences and achievements in one lifetime for most mortals. But, incredibly, STROM THURMOND's greatest days were still ahead of him.

In 1954, he won his first election to the U.S. Senate as a write-in candidate—making him the only person in history to be elected to the Senate as a write-in candidate. He has now become the longest-serving Senator in history, and the oldest person ever to have served in the Senate.

But it is more than longevity that has made STROM THURMOND an extraordinary Senator. As chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, he has fought for a stronger military to keep our country free, and he has fought for tougher anti-crime laws to make our streets safer. As President pro tempore of the Senate, he brought dignity, style, and a southern refinement to this important position.

For these and other achievements, he has had high schools, state and federal buildings, as well as streets, dams, and town squares named in his honor. A few years ago (1991), the Senate designated room S-238 here in the U.S. Capitol as the "Strom Thurmond Room" "in recognition of the selfless and dedicated service" that he has "provided . . . to our Nation and its people."

On this, his 99th birthday, I wish to say what a privilege and an honor it

has been to have served with this remarkable man for all these years.

He has always been an outstanding legislator, a Southern gentleman, and foremost, a good and dear friend.

Happy birthday, Senator. God Bless you.

#### COMPREHENSIVE RETIREMENT SECURITY AND PENSION REFORM ACT OF 2001—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion is vitiated and the clerk will read the bill for the third time.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read a third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There is sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. REID. I announce that the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) is absent attending a funeral.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 90, nays 9, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 351 Leg.]

#### YEAS—90

Akaka	Dodd	Lugar
Allen	Domenici	McCain
Baucus	Dorgan	McConnell
Bayh	Durbin	Mikulski
Bennett	Edwards	Miller
Biden	Ensign	Murkowski
Bingaman	Enzi	Murray
Bond	Feingold	Nelson (FL)
Boxer	Feinstein	Nelson (NE)
Breaux	Fitzgerald	Reed
Brownback	Frist	Reid
Bunning	Graham	Roberts
Burns	Grassley	Rockefeller
Byrd	Hagel	Santorum
Campbell	Harkin	Sarbanes
Cantwell	Hatch	Schumer
Carnahan	Hollings	Sessions
Carper	Hutchinson	Shelby
Chafee	Hutchison	Smith (OR)
Cleland	Inhofe	Snowe
Clinton	Inouye	Specter
Cochran	Jeffords	Stabenow
Collins	Johnson	Stevens
Conrad	Kennedy	Thompson
Corzine	Kerry	Thurmond
Craig	Kohl	Torricelli
Crapo	Landrieu	Voinovich
Daschle	Leahy	Warner
Dayton	Levin	Wellstone
DeWine	Lincoln	Wyden

#### NAYS—9

Allard	Helms	Nickles
Gramm	Kyl	Smith (NH)
Gregg	Lott	Thomas

#### NOT VOTING—1

Lieberman

The bill (H.R. 10) was passed.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. SARBANES. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the title amendment be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The title amendment was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I thank all those who worked so assiduously, thoughtfully, and carefully on this bill. There are lots of people I could commend. Two people I particularly commend are on my staff: Tom Klouda and Alan Cohen, who are sitting at my left. They know this issue inside and out and have been of invaluable service to me personally. I just want them to know how much I appreciate their very fine work. They have done a great job.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Florida). The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Chamber as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 1291

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 194, S. 1088; further, that the Rockefeller-Specter substitute amendment at the desk be agreed to, the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to, as amended, the bill be read a third time, that the Veterans Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1291, the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration, that all after the enacting clause be stricken, the text of S. 1088, as amended, be inserted in lieu thereof, the bill be read a third time and passed, the title amendment be agreed to, S. 1088 be returned to the calendar, and any statements related thereto be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I must say that I am mystified as to why there would be an objection to proceeding to consideration of this bill. I realize that the objecting Senator is not the one holding up passage of this important piece of veterans legislation. But as the hold is anonymous, I would ask whichever one of the Senators

across the aisle is holding the bill to please come and speak to me to let me know the nature of the objection. As far as I know, the Committee's Ranking Member also has no idea who has objected to the bill. This bill was voted unanimously out of Committee and is completely lacking in controversy.

More specifically this bill makes significant enhancements to educational benefits for veterans and their families. The original GI Bill allowed a generation of soldiers returning from World War II to create the booming post-war economy, and, in fact, the prosperity that we enjoy today. Today's Montgomery GI Bill, MGIB, modeled after the original GI Bill, provides a valuable recruitment and retention tool for the Armed Services and begins to repay veterans for the service they have given to our Nation. As a transition benefit, it allows veterans to gain the skills they need to adjust productively to civilian life.

I am very pleased that the legislation would increase the MGIB basic monthly benefit by \$50 per month this year, \$100 in 2002, and \$150 in 2003. I am even more proud that this bill also takes the next evolutionary step to keep pace with the careers and education that today's veterans require. As our colleagues know, many servicemembers leave the military with skills that place them in demand for careers in the technology sector. But even these veterans may require coursework to convert their military skills to civilian careers. The bill would allow veterans to use their Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits to pay for short-term, high technology courses that would allow veterans to earn the credentials they need to gain entry to today's civilian-sector careers.

Currently, the MGIB provides a basic monthly benefit of \$672 for 36 months of education. This payment structure is designed to assist veterans pursuing traditional four-year degrees at universities. However, in today's fast paced, high-tech economy, traditional degrees may not always be the best option. Many veterans are pursuing forms of nontraditional training, such as short-term courses that lead to certification in a technical field. In certain fields, these certifications are a prerequisite to employment.

These courses often last just a few weeks or months, and can cost many thousands of dollars. The way MGIB is paid out in monthly disbursements is not suited to this course structure. For example, MGIB would pay only \$1,344 for a two-month course that could cost as much as \$10,000.

The percentage of veterans who actually use the MGIB benefits they have earned and paid for is startlingly low—45% of eligible veterans, according to VA's Program Evaluation of the Montgomery GI Bill published in April 2000—despite almost full enrollment in

the program by servicemembers. By increasing the flexibility of the MGIB program, we will permit more veterans to take advantage of these benefits. We should give veterans the right to choose whatever kind of educational program will be best for them.

This legislation would modify the payment method to accommodate the compressed schedule of the courses. Specifically, it would allow veterans to receive an accelerated payment equal to 60 percent of the cost of the program. This is comparable to VA's MGIB benefit for flight training, for which VA reimburses 60 percent of the costs. The dollar value of the accelerated payment would then be deducted from the veteran's remaining entitlement. This provision would also allow courses offered by these providers to be covered by MGIB.

A provision that is extremely important right now would preserve educational benefits for those that must leave their studies to serve on active duty in support of the National Emergency declared in response to the events of September 11th. This provision would restore educational entitlements for recipients of the Montgomery GI Bill, Veterans Educational Assistance Program, VEAP, and Dependent's Educational Allowance, DEA, for regular servicemembers and reservists who are called up for active duty and who are forced to relocate or take on extra work because of their participation in support of the National Emergency. Their ability to complete their education should not be compromised because they were called up in our fight against terrorism.

The bill would also increase the Dependent's Educational Allowance for dependents and eligible spouses of veterans to \$690 from \$588. This program primarily provides for the children whose education would be impeded because of the disability or death of a parent due to a service-related condition. In addition, unremarried surviving spouses of veterans are generally eligible for the educational allowance in order to assist them in preparing to support themselves and their families at the standard-of-living level that the veteran could have been expected to provide for his or her family but for the service-connected disability or death. As we send troops into harm's way, it is entirely appropriate that we ensure that their families' futures are secure.

The bill also enhances home loan programs. VA provides a guaranty to mortgage lenders rather than a direct home loan to servicemembers and veterans. A VA guaranty allows a veteran to buy a home valued at up to four times the guaranty amount. The price of homes in major metropolitan areas has increased significantly in the last several years, yet the VA guaranty amount has not been increased since 1994.